651 For the Baloum Naba, the work was done by all the bilbalsé.
645 The Kam Naba set the day for the sekka (gathering), and all the
241 young and able-bodied men were required to report. They received the food they required from the Baloum Naba. The number of work days was not fixed. The sekka might be held once or several times, depending on the acreage.

For the other ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Gounga Naba, and Larrhallé Naba, the field work was done by the people in their entourage (that is, the inhabitants of their respective sections) and in the neighboring villages which were formerly under their jurisdiction. Since the formation of the canton of Ouagadougou and its outskirts, the area has been under the exclusive authority of the Baloum Naba (fourth minister of the emperor).

645 If, however, the fields were so extensive that their cultiva-
476 tion could not be taken care of solely by the above system -- the
241 laborers also had to care for their own fields -- the ministers [76] called for volunteers from among the young men in the neighboring villages and paid them with food and drink. This is the sissoaga, a system commonly in use among the Mossi.

645 (b) Construction and repair of houses. As a general rule, re-
651 pair of the roofs of huts in the establishments of the province chiefs
356 was the duty of the inhabitants of their respective sections and of the neighboring villages under their jurisdiction.

651 The canton chiefs. The cultivation of the fields of the naba
634 and the repair of the huts in their establishments were wholly in-
241 cumbent on their subjects. Each village had a fixed number of
356 huts to be repaired or roofed; this is known as sough 'pilli, and it is still in effect annually.

651 Today, perhaps in the interests of tranquillity, canton chiefs require labor service in their fields only from their sogoné and samand 'kamba and sometimes even resort to the sissoaga.

The local administration, with respect for local customs, has the policy of organizing the system in a way that, in our opinion, will safeguard the interests of the natives, overburdened due to the negligence of the province chiefs, and at the same time will enhance the prestige of the Mossi chiefs.

653 The naba is not entitled to any other labor services. The building of dams to provide water for the villages cannot be

653 considered forced labor since this work is done in the common interest.

[77] Installation of a Market

366 787 782 As in many other circumstances, the Mossi first consult soothsayers when they desire to establish a market. The Moaga [singular of Mossi] is convinced that invisible spirits are everywhere, behind his house, under the trees, in the fields and groves, and even in uninhabited places, so above all he is anxious to obtain the good will of these beings whose anger is fearful. It is, therefore, only after consulting several soothsayers, who use various types of divination (with cowries, stones, sand, etc.), that the village chief has chickens and livestock sacrificed on the site where he wishes to set up the new market. The naba chooses two or three candidates from among his followers, and the soothsayers are required to indicate which of these has the best prospect of good fortune and a promising future. This person will be the one who performs the sacrifice. The victims are furnished, in theory, by the village or canton chief, unless he decides to call on the populace. In this case, a small assessment is made on some of the notables, and the proceeds are used to buy chickens, a goat, or a sheep.

366 782 In any event, the canton chief is not permitted to appropriate the animals in the villages or sections under his jurisdiction as would be done in the case of sacrifices offered for the general welfare of the country.

The individual chosen by the bagba [soothsayers] presents himself at the site, accompanied by a more or less [78] impressive crowd, depending on the importance of the village. The women bring fritters and other provisions.

The following sacramental words are pronounced: "Ya sida Ting' Naba yeta nan lougoul dagh, Naba zidwendé Bad kom deghin kon zigh tinghin damba, tib kon yaramba, tib regh kon saramba, tiya gnimassem lad ratta, tib regh lass zim-yellé, tiya nogoam la tigue koada soaba lad zoïta." A literal translation follows. "This is true, the canton chief wishes to install a market on this spot. Oh God, the Sun, here are water and animals for zigh tinghin damba (people who died childless), for grandparents and ancestors. We ask

The Basgha of the Mogho Naba, or the Nights the Emperor M'ba (Rarengma) Sleeps Away from Home

(May my father not arrive before I do.)

769 782 796 The basgha. Before making use of his newly harvested crops, the Moaga ikanda (married man, head of a family) is obligated to offer this new produce to his ancestors. Therefore, he has dam (dolo, millet beer) prepared with the large red [153] millet, already sprouted, and cakes made with the millet or the sorghum. He kills chickens and a goat, or a ram, and invites his neighbors and relatives to the feast. He is convinced that the manes of his ancestors share the feast.

The emperor of the Mossi is no exception to this rule. The basgha of the Mogho Naba is celebrated with more pomp, and we shall describe it briefly below.

It should first be noted that there is no particular date set by custom for the basgha, either for the Mogho Naba or for the ordinary Moaga. Everyone celebrates it whenever he can after the harvest.

491 ●653 The sotasgo (completion of the road). Before the French came and the administration took over road building, each minister had a road or, more accurately, a broad path which led straight to the king's courtyard and which had to be maintained by the minister. Since everyone is busy in the fields during the winter months, it is easily understandable that the roads are somewhat neglected during that season. When the Mogho Naba decides to put everything to rights with his ancestors, he notifies the Ouidi Naba, his first minister, who sends word to the other ministers that they must clear their soyan (from soré, "path"). The ministers order the inhabitants of their respective sections to do the work, but put off completing the last stretch leading into the courtyard, samandé, [154] until the date for sotasgo is known.

653 Sotasgo takes place on a Saturday.

The Ouidi Naba makes a large pile of several loads of millet (kaguindi) and chooses about forty strong young men to carry it into the court of the king. His colleagues (Larrhallé Naba, Gounga

653 Naba, and Baloum Naba) do the same thing. (We have seen in an earlier chapter, under "Payments to the Mogho Naba" that the millet brought by the ministers and vassals makes up the food supply for the emperor and his wives; the harvest from his own fields is used to feed foreigners and to make beer for the basgha.)

533 In order to arouse the young men to greater efforts, drummers accompany them, playing "pang'rog'kamga, kamba komsomba (these young men were born of strength; they are worthy of their parents)."

Loads of millet are presented to the emperor during his first audience (wend'pous yan), after the ministers have paid their respects. The Soré Naba (literally, "chief of the path"), taking his place before the Mogho Naba, but with his back to him, orders the young men by the sound of drums to finish clearing the roads of the naba up to the king's courtyard. Since the work was virtually completed, this is a mere formality.

The ministers' followers and the bearers who brought in the millet, equipped with axes, daba, and even sticks, pretend to work energetically. They gesticulate, cry out, and [155] sing. The Soré Naba then goes under a shelter reserved for him, and the young men join him there.

796 769 The Ouidi Naba, the Larrhallé Naba, the Gounga Naba, and the Kamsaoug'Naba salute the emperor, and it is only then that the latter sets the date for the celebration of his basgha.

Once the date is set, the bodyguards of the Mogho Nabo (samand'kamba), whose chiefs are Samandé and Rakogdo, are ordered to start at once to repairing the shelters in the courtyard where the daily audiences are held.

Sleeping away from home. Three days before the Feast of the Dead and as soon as he has given his pugtiéma (first wife) the sprouted millet for making dam (beer), the Mogho Naba becomes uneasy. This is because the kimsé (manes of his ancestors) are present in the house. He must find more peaceful lodgings.

On Wednesday evening, therefore, he goes to the home of the Samand'Naba of Kamsaoghin. He spends the night there, but at cockcrow the following morning he returns to his home where he spends the day. That night he goes to Gounghin and spends the night in a house near the home of the Gounga Naba, his third minister.